

What is a Creative Treatment?

The Treatment is **NOT** a script. It is the step **just before** a script, a kind of blueprint for writing a script.

It lays out a description of all that you are supposed to see and hear in a video project, but doesn't actually define any specific spoken dialogue. Rather, in a step-by-step way, it describes who does what, where, and what they are talking about, and what we the audience see and hear. The Treatment is a way to show, in text form, what the program or spot will look like, the creative approach that will be taken, before any time or money is spent in production. It is a tool for making decisions and for saving you time and money.

The Treatment is the most important tool our staff needs when determining the budget numbers and timelines for producing your project. By looking over the Treatment, we see the number of people involved, what kind of locations or sets might be needed, what kind of props, effects and special technical features are needed, if special informational points need to be made, and how much time it will take to produce, shoot, and edit the finished work. Without a Treatment to base our estimates on, we're all playing a guessing game as to how much your production will eventually cost. With a Treatment in hand, we eliminate many unknowns, changes, and duplication of effort, and our estimates become much more accurate and dependable. The extra information from the Treatment may also allow us to think of other ways to lower your costs.

Finally, the Treatment is a common reference document, so that all the people working on the project and overseeing approvals have the same exact idea in mind of what we're doing, and how it is supposed to look. This is especially important for large projects run by committees. What one member of the committee pictures in their head when thinking about the project may be very different from the ideas of another member. The Treatment formalizes this process and removes unwanted surprises, so what you see is what you will get – AND what you really wanted all along. You will never have to hear the phrase: "That's not how I thought it was going to look", if you use a Treatment first.

How do I develop a Creative Treatment?

You don't need any special software, and you don't have to be a skilled script writer, but once you've outlined a Treatment, any scriptwriter can easily make that outline come to life with specific dialog. It is a little like dictating a letter or telling a story out loud. But the easiest way to explain it may be to just show you one.

Below is a short example of a made-up video project's Treatment, so you can get an idea of the style. *The parenthetical comments are from us, and not part of the actual Treatment.*

CREATIVE TREATMENT GUIDE

“Creative Treatment for proposed phone center operator training video, 15 minute running time, made for DVD viewing and internet streaming and viewed by new hires, ages 25-up, of at least High School Graduate education level..”

(This already tells us some key things about the program length, who it is for, and how it will be shown)

“The video teaches newly-hired call center operators some common tips for handling customer calls faster yet with better efficiency and success. The creative approach to show this is to have an expert co-worker and supervisor sit-in with the new hire on some calls, and then go over what was good and bad about each call. The cast is a New Employee Operator, an Experienced Operator, and their Supervisor. The setting is a call center with individual office cubes. A few scenes will also happen in a nearby break room and Supervisor office. After viewing, the operators should be able to 1: handle three common types of problem callers in a better way than before, 2: know the three transaction tools, as they are called, and 3: they will be able to take more successful calls in the same amount of time.”

(Now we begin to know how many locations to plan for in the budget, and what kind of locations they are, for our cameramen and lighting and sound technicians. And we have defined a measureable product or “metric” for the result of watching these programs. In this case, it will be shorter calls, done better, and more of them in the same amount of time. Also, the limited number of goals for the program is not unrealistic for the length of time of the show)

First Scene:

Introduction: about a minute long

A narration on the screen welcomes us to the program, and explains video purpose.

Second Scene: The new hire

Location: cubicle at a phone bank, the cube is brand new and vacant of anything personal, a blank canvas for the new hire to inhabit.

Action: A new operator is introduced to their workstation by the Supervisor, who sits in and listens on a headset as the operator begins taking a tech support call from an agitated customer. The call does not go well: the customer has very little patience and is hard to keep the customer focused on the data the operator needs before they can work the problem. The conversation becomes argumentative and defensive; by the end, both parties are a little jangled by it. The supervisor watches, but lets the operator struggle on alone. At one point, the Supervisor scribbles a little note or sign and shows it to the operator character; we can see that this hinting note has a key phrase the operator should use on the customer. The operator successfully concludes the call, and comes up for air. The Supervisor now discusses what was good and bad about that call, and suggests the new hire sit-in with our “expert” character to pick up some more tips.

Third Scene:

Location: Break Room

Action: The New Operator and the Experienced Operator meet and plan how the sit-in will go. Experienced Operator describes one way that they use to get callers back on track if they are very upset. Experienced Operator will also review the Three Main Tools of Transaction for call-handling. On-screen graphics, superimposed on the scene, will reinforce each point as it is made. Now, they exit the scene and we arrive at..."

Fourth Scene: the afternoon call session

Location: Expert Person's cubicle, it looks different from the first cube because it has had time to get personalized with various personal effects and memos tacked up on the walls over time.

Action: New Operator is sharing the same workstation as Experienced Operator; they are taking turns at the same console. Experienced Operator smoothly guides a caller thru the Three Tools dialogue and closes out the ticket successfully. New Operator takes a turn, and, with one little hiccup in the conversation, does the same. Experienced Operator makes a minor observation on the small error and the New Operator shows that they are starting to catch on to the method. New Operator can be seen to gain confidence in the Standard Method being taught. With the next call comes a real bear of a case; the caller is nearly hysterical with frustration. Somewhat taken aback, but determined, our New Operator doggedly follows the three-point procedure and resolves the call on their own. As the New Operator apply the three Tools, graphics that point out each tool appear superimposed along the bottom of the screen to reinforce which tool is being applied at that time. Now the call is done. The two operators discuss what just happened and what kinds of variations one can use in applying the three points or transaction tools we've been discussing. They run thru one more call and it goes smooth as glass: not only is the customer happy by the end of the call, the Operator is as well. New Operator says they now feel confident and ready to get back to their own cube to apply what they've learned.

Fifth Scene: wrap-up.

Location: Supervisor's office

Action: Supervisor is showing New Operator a breakdown of the operator's productivity on a print-out. The chart clearly shows a steadily improving trend in the new hire's call volume and customer satisfaction by month's end. They decide that the first piece of decoration the New Operator's bare cube should get is a framed copy of this good news report.

Fade to black; list the three main points one more time on the screen for reinforcement, and we are done."